

COUNCIL MEETING
11 SEPTEMBER 2013
LEADER'S STATEMENT

Madam Mayor, Members and Officers of the Council, there has been one meeting of the Cabinet since the last meeting of the Council.

Before I get to that I have to start my statement with the details of further, deeper, cuts that the Government are forcing us to make in 2014/15 and 2015/16 to the Council's already depleted budgets.

For 2014-15 the Council had agreed at the budget meeting back in February to cut make cuts of **£7.432m**. However in the Chancellor's March budget there was reference to a further 1% reduction in Government funding. This has now been confirmed by DCLG which means we now have to find a total of **£10.166m** a rise of another **£2.2m**.

As if this wasn't bad enough we then got the Chancellor's announcement on June 26th of the outcome of his Comprehensive Spending Review for 2015-16 where he slashed another 10% off the funding for local government.

We have now received the technical papers for 2015-16 and I have to ask when is a 10% cut not 10% cut? Well it's when it becomes an Eric Pickles special and suddenly without any fanfare to the tabloids, I wonder why? We have now a **14%** cut, yes a **14%** cut which means at least **£16m** pounds of yet more devastating cuts to our services on top of the **£28m** we have already identified up to the end of 2013-14. By the time we get to the end of 2015-16 this total rises to **£54m**. **I am not often lost for words, but what I can say to that, at least Dick Turpin wore a mask.**

In effect the actions of Eric and his chums means that some **£750** per Bury household has been ripped out of our budgets. This of course doesn't include any demand pressures we are facing in Adults and Children's Services.

Our Eric talks the talk to feed the tabloid press but operates in the dark underworld where he sneaks out details of the real cuts story well away from the prying eyes of Parliament and the press. And then has the gall to say final details will not be available until after Christmas, just one month before we have to set our budget. This is something no Secretary of State has ever condoned but there again he is no lover of local government and is quite happy to see Council's who are on the front-line make these savage cuts.

Nobody can tell me that a government can slash Council budgets by over 50% and still talk of '**we are all in this together**'. I haven't seen Eric's budgets or any of the Whitehall Departmental budgets cut by over 50%, and so Madam Mayor those words '**we are all in this together**' will ring very hollow for many of our most vulnerable residents here in Bury for many many years to come.

In Bury we believe deeply about fair play and being treated as we would wish to treat others, but this latest swathe of savage and unfair cuts is beyond the pale. They mean that we will see much more hardship; many more vulnerable, and not so vulnerable, people being affected and most of all we see the public being hoodwinked by the master of the dark arts into believing Council's are wasteful and can carry on providing more for less.

Madam Mayor, we cannot just sit back and let Pickles and chums carry on decimating local services with impunity. I've talked many times in this Chamber about the need for a Fair Deal for Bury and every time the opposition Members have shied away from joining us and shied away from taking the fight to Eric. Well now it's time for them to nail their colours to the mast.

I know this will be difficult for Members opposite and so I want to take it one step at a time. I will be writing to the Secretary of State later this week in response to his invitation to comment on the latest figures. I want this letter to be an all party letter. I now challenge them to say whether they will put Bury people, Bury services and Bury Council before national party loyalty and join me in signing this letter.

It's time to stand up and fight for the people of Bury and I sincerely hope they will join this administration/me in this fight.

I will now move on to the work of the Cabinet...

Corporate Plan Progress Report

At the last Cabinet we considered the Corporate Plan's end of year position for 2012-13 and I'm pleased to say that despite all the pressures facing services, performance remained high. 33 indicators (or 62% of the total reported) improved on the previous year and 10 were just off the pace. Only 2 of the 45 key indicators reported were below target to any significant degree.

Corporate Financial Performance – Month 3

Madam Mayor the Cabinet received a progress report covering the period April to June. Members I am sure will agree that successful budget monitoring provides early warning of potential major overspends or underspends against budgets which Members need to be aware of.

This report drew attention to the fact that based on the most prudent of forecasts; several budget hotspots exist, most notably in Adults and Childrens along with Waste Management which will all need remedial action. Members and officers will continue to examine these areas in more detail at the Star Chambers.

GCSE Results

Madam Mayor, clearly August has been a very important month for many students in our schools and Colleges in Bury who have received their GCSE, AS and A2 results. I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to them for their successes and to their teachers, parents and everyone else for all the support they have given them. We are very proud of our young people and hope that they have achieved what they wanted to go on to the next step in their learning or career. If they haven't we are all ready to help them with more advice and support.

It is too early to say very much about the overall position on the GCSE results this year – we won't be able to be definite until later in the year when we get the validated results. However, it looks at this stage that overall results are at least as good as the record breaking results achieved last year at a time when the overall national trend appears to be downwards. Young people in Bury schools, and colleges, receive an outstanding education.”

Tourism

Madam Mayor we all know in this Chamber what a great place Bury is to visit and I am pleased to announce that a combination of our Tourism strategy; strong partnership working and ongoing infrastructure investment programme is paying dividends where the number of stays at hotels and guest houses rose by nearly 20%. In addition, the visitor spending is up 4½% at just over £300m and where increasingly Bury is seen as a destination of choice.

LGA Peer Review

Madam Mayor I am also pleased to announce that as part of this Administration's commitment to openness and transparency I have agreed to a Local Government Association Peer Review to be held this coming November. The Peer review team which includes a Leader and Chief Executive from other Councils will look at:

- Council Priorities
- Financial planning and viability
- Political and Managerial leadership
- Effective Governance and Decision Making
- Organisational Capacity

Once the review team have finished they will provide a report for Cabinet which will be a public document.

Sculpture Centre

I am pleased to be able to announce another exciting new addition to the cultural offer in Bury's vibrant town centre.

A successful funding application to the Arts Council of England means that we will be developing a Sculpture Centre within the art gallery, museum and library complex which will bring a national and regional attraction to the heart of Bury's Culture Quarter. It is anticipated that other funding opportunities (such as the Henry Moore Foundation and Birkbeck) as well as income generated from activities such as conferences, will follow. This new, sculpture centre will give us the opportunity to host touring sculpture collections as well as acting as the visitor centre for the whole of the Irwell Sculpture trail. We intend that the new Sculpture Centre will be fully open by May next year.

Straight Ally – Launch Event

I was pleased to attend the launch of Bury Council's Straight Ally event last week. The Council is recruiting a network of straight employees and elected Members who are publically committed to the development of a more inclusive culture for LGBT employees here at the Council.

Fire-fighter Stephen Hunt

Finally, Madam Mayor, following on from the sad occasion of Drummer Lee Rigby's funeral I, along with Mayor represented the Council last week at the funeral of Fire-fighter Stephen Hunt, who tragically lost his life protecting others whilst searching a building ravaged with fire in Manchester City Centre. I was proud and pleased to see so many people out on the streets around Bury Parish Church to pay their last respects to this brave fire-fighter just doing his job.

Our condolences go out to his family and friends at their tragic loss.

Madam Mayor that concludes my statement.

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